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ABSTRACT

This document examines the concern of teachers at the school level for continuing, relevant inservice training, the disatisfaction they are experiencing with traditional inservice programs, and the ways in which local education associations (LEA's) can help improve inservice education. Teachers are now demanding that inservice (1) be related to day-by-day needs, (2) be developed through teacher self-assessment of needs, (3) be planned with teachers having a preeminent voice in determining both content and delivery methods, (4) be related to a teacher's total professional development, and (5) not duplicate offerings available elsewhere. Three categories of needs for inservice exist--the institutional need (for teacher improvement in specific curriculum areas), the professional organization's need (for the general proficiency of its members), and the faculty or individual need for personal growth). Assuming the LEA considers it in the best interest of members to attempt to include inservice education in the teacher contract, provisions may be negotiated to preserve existing programs and/or to develop new ones. If the association chooses the second course, the opportunity arises for developing policy changes in time allowances, reimbursement, teacher involvement in planning, instructional approaches, and program planning participation. Implementation of the program guidelines could be done using school district staff or a neutral joint committee composed of administrators and faculty. (MJB)

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How the Local Education Association Can Help Improve In-Service Education

Teachers regularly, and in great numbers, attend state and district teacher conventions. If travel is involved, it is usually at their own expense. Teachers invariably talk shop, exchanging teaching tips and seeking out instructional insights with colleagues. And as employees of the school district, teachers are asked by their supervisors to serve on instructional councils and curriculum committees and to help plan the one- or two-day in-service education days offered to the staff by most districts.

In short, teachers have been demonstrating for as long as can be remembered that they realize learning is a lifelong process and that there is always more to learn about the art and science of teaching.

Teachers Demand Improved In-Service

Past methods of acquiring in-service education, however, are being met increasingly by teacher dissatisfaction. Now teachers are demanding that:

- In-service education be more closely related to day-by-day job needs and made a part of the job assignment.
- In-service offerings be based on assessment by teachers of their own job needs.
- They have a preeminent voice in determining both the content of their in-service education programs and the delivery system--the ways and means teachers think are most meaningful for acquiring new skills, insights, and knowledge.
- In-service education be related broadly to a teacher's total professional development and overall competence as well as focused specifically on improving or acquiring a designated instructional technique.
- In-service education not duplicate offerings available elsewhere--at colleges and universities, for example--but be designed to meet unique teaching requirements.

Kinds of In-Service Education

1. Institutional Needs. The school administration has the right and obligation to meet the needs of the institution by developing in-service programs which are designed to promote instructional proficiency in specific curriculum areas and to enable employees to meet new community demands made on the school system. From the standpoint of faculty motivation and enhanced learning, employee involvement in planning institutional programs is extremely important. From the legal standpoint, however, the employer has no obligation to secure employee

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participation in planning. Programs of this kind should be provided on "company time"--during the regular school day or paid time for extra hours--and employees reimbursed for any out-of-pocket expenditures.

2. Professional Association Needs. The education association itself has a recognized need to promote and encourage in-service education for its members. Representative of this type of in-service education might be (a) how to be an effective building representative, or (b) principles of professional negotiations. School management may provide released time for this kind of in-service training, or the association may legitimately schedule the programs on the members' own time and at association expense.

3. Faculty or Individual Teacher Needs. Members of the teaching faculty have their own needs for their professional proficiency and growth--needs not adequately fulfilled in preservice training or not clearly perceived by the school administration or board of education. Often these needs pertain to skillful handling of day-to-day problems of instruction, knowledge of and availability of resource materials, and adequate familiarity with human relationships or communication. While there is no question about the legitimacy of these faculty needs, it is usually necessary for teachers collectively to seek to have the administration meet these needs on school time and at school board expense. Teacher association membership dues may be used legitimately to influence the board of education to provide and administer these kinds of programs to meet faculty needs.

Professional Negotiation for In-Service Education

Given the fact that a local association expresses concern for in-service education as a negotiable item, it does not follow that this concern will automatically find its way to the bargaining table. Nor does it follow that if the concern is a part of the package the association's negotiating team takes to the table it will remain there throughout the negotiations process. And even if it does remain, it may not emerge in its original form.

But assuming the local association considers it in the best interest of its members to include in-service education items in the package, what might they be? Two broad alternatives for action exist:

1. Provisions designed to preserve an existing in-service education program. (A program that the school district develops unilaterally can be abandoned unilaterally. A program that is incorporated into the collective agreement cannot so easily be cast aside unilaterally.)

2. Provisions designed to bring about changes in the existing program.

If the association elects to follow the second alternative, it is faced with devising negotiation language which will express its policy position on the changes it considers desirable. These changes might include some or all of the following:

- Released time for in-service education. (Implementation could require either the assurance of an adequate supply of trained substitutes or changes in the school organization plan which would build into job assignments opportunities for in-service education.)

- Assurance of either sufficient involvement in or control over both the design of needs assessment procedures and the interpretation of findings to ensure that the in-service program reflects the needs as perceived by teachers.

- Reimbursement to teachers of reasonable out-of-pocket expenses that may be incurred by participating in in-service activities.

- A broad range of in-service approaches (as distinguished from a catalog of courses) which include provision for school-by-school development of in-service programs and for individualized training programs.

- Guidelines for the development of in-service programs on a school-by-school (faculty-by-faculty) basis.

- Provision for each teacher to participate in the program, provided participation falls within time and fiscal guidelines.

- Rate of reimbursement to be paid in the event of mandatory attendance outside the school day.

- Recognition of the right of the school district to require participation in in-service activities subject to some limitation on the number of school and/or substitute teacher hours available for such programs.

Once policy guidelines for a change in in-service education have been negotiated the question then becomes, who should be responsible for making the change? The two sides of the negotiations committee, either during negotiations or at a later date? The association itself? The school district staff? An ostensibly neutral joint committee operating under policy directions negotiated into the contract?

Each of these options has advantages and liabilities. What may be considered an ideal approach by one local association may seem most inappropriate to another. In practice, two of the options seem to be negotiated with greater frequency: (1) turning the design of the program over to school district staff, subject to

criteria negotiated into the agreement; and (2) giving responsibility for design development to a neutral joint committee.

If either of these alternatives is followed--particularly the latter--the school district must make available to the committee expert technical and professional assistance to help with questions such as: How do adults learn? How do they acquire new skills? What structure is required to encourage teachers to try out new teaching behaviors? What research and practice is there to point toward new philosophical and pedagogical goals? What new substantive content is required?

Whatever course should be followed in providing this kind of design and conceptual expertise--whether it is to use existing professional development staff, hire additional staff, or employ outside consultants--this in itself may be an item for negotiation.

Ways Teachers Learn
(In addition to classes and courses)

- Videotaping and analysis of their teaching performance
- Simulation exercises (of parent conferences, for example)
- Field visits to community facilities
- Demonstration teaching (by other teachers, with opportunity to discuss and analyze teaching processes)
- Opportunities for short-term individualized study and research
- Exchange teaching (collaborative planning and evaluation)
- Exchange of roles with counselor and others
- Building-level, "hands-on" workshops

Further information on needs assessment for in-service education and on planning workshops for members to build association interest in in-service education is available. Write to:

Teacher Centered Professional Development
National Education Association
1201 Sixteenth St., N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20036